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Community Compromise Sown By Revenge Between The Lines

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Very few of us were surprised to read a recent *Los Angeles Times* article in how Los Angeles City Councilman Bernard Parks put the FBI on County Supervisor, Mark Ridley-Thomas, the person that defeated (and demoralized) him the same night America elected its first black President. Ridley-Thomas' landslide was bigger than Obama's. Some say it was worse than the whipping the late 2nd District Supervisor, Kenny Hahn, put on retired judge and former 8th district councilman, Billy Mills. The old-timers remember that one and they talk about it like Louis-Schmeling, Clay-Liston, Foreman-Frazier. Well, on this election night, Howard Cosell would have been shouting from his broadcast booth, "Down goes Parks, Down goes Parks, Down goes Parks." The support out there for Parks was basically Westside Republicans (and of course, *L.A. Sentinel*-you knew I couldn't miss that opportunity). And he took about the same kind of whuppin the national Republicans did.

The "Parks effect," caused by his non-rehiring as police chief and being an aggrieved grandfather, had worn off. The polish was off this boot, and enough people had run up against this arrogant, defiant (some might even say deviant) cop turned "pretend" politician, that he had about as much of a chance of being County Supervisor as I did—and I wasn't on the ballot. Everybody knew how Parks got on City Council, but few knew why he got on the council until it evidenced itself a year later when it became obvious that it was a total revenge against former Mayor James Hahn. Parks needed the council seat to launch a faux Mayoral bid—not to win, but to draw enough black support to cause Hahn to lose.

And that's exactly how it played out. Parks is doing to Ridley-Thomas what he did to

Willie Williams, the FIRST African American Chief of Police that was brought in over Parks. What he did to Jim Hahn, whose beef with Parks ran back to the days when Hahn was City Attorney and paying out record police abuse settlements that then assistant chief Parks defended, dissing Hahn every step of the way. And what he did to the very district he purportedly represents when he sunk projects that had either Ridley-Thomas' or Mayor Hahn's fingerprints on them. Parks whole essence in his latte-day public life has been about sowing the seeds of revenge. But this is a new low.

The master of the "story plant" (a carryover from his police training), Parks suggested in his election night "sour loser" comments after his supervisor seat defeat, a classless display of refusing to concede and baseless allegations, that we hadn't heard the last of this. We thought he was just delusional after taking the thumpin' he took. He couldn't even believe he lost like that. There certainly had to be some foul play afoot. Naw, the true sentiment of the people finally played out. Not everybody was in love with Mark, though clearly many were, but they damn sure had no love for Bernie. It wasn't uncommon to hear people say they make a mistake in voting for the "po'lice." And it was more a knock on Parks than the cops, because they remember what kind of cop Parks was.

A Gates cop that often defended the indefensible for the sake of "blue," Parks blind ambition always put the community behind his own. And his revenge plays were legendary. You have never seen a former cop that couldn't pull not one major police endorsement, from anywhere. All the big ones endorsed Ridley-Thomas. When the people who worked with you 30 plus years won't endorse, the community certainly should have that tune in our heads, "God is trying to tell you something, right now, Right Now, RIGHT NOW!!! All you Colored Purple folks know what I'm talking about. But for some reason, we missed it. Missed it BIGTIME.

When Parks took over Leimert Park after succeeding Ridley-Thomas in the councilmatic eighth district, the area was thriving and poised to do some major economic development with a newly approved business improvement district (BID). The first thing Parks did was dismantle the CDC, started by Ridley-Thomas, that got the BID approved and was funding for it to be funded so it could run the BID. When Parks gave the BID contract to a competing non-profit, the CDC folded. Then Parks dismantled a \$5 million dollar development to bring a three story office with a roof top garden restaurant and opportunity for reduced rents office space for the Leimert Park merchants on a lot at 43rd and Degnan.

The city owns the land, the developers were the CDC and the major investor, who was set to move his television and radio studios to tape his show "live from Leimert Park. The city was in, the financing was in, the merchants were in. All the community needed was their councilman to advance the development through city council. Because Parks saw this as "Hahn's deal" and "Ridley-Thomas' CDC sweetheart deal," though the community would have benefited greatly, Parks refused to carry the deal. The investor tired of waiting, pulled out and the deal fell apart. Parks' revenge played out on the community, but he had a great replacement for the multi-million dollar deal...a farmers market. Lowest use benefit for the highest valued vacant land in the area. Genius. While trying to make a comeback, Leimert Park is still just a shell of its former self. The community never got over it, and still hasn't.

So when the community went with Ridley-Thomas, Parks went to the feds and the newspapers. The *L.A. Times*, always willing to get in the middle of a good community fight, took it and ran with it. The feds are stiffin' around for something that is not there, but on a "police tip" they're obligated to investigate it. So, here we are again, the

community being compromised because revenge is the primary motivation. When it comes to Parks and righting his failed ambitions, wrong after wrong seems to make it right for him. Or at least even. And where does that leave us, the community? In the middle of a frustrated career cop's revenge play.

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